DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 082 254 CS 500 419

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TITLE To Disturb the Sounds of Silence: Interpersonal Communication Behavioral Objectives.
PUB DATE Apr 73
NOTE 13p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Southern Speech Communication Assn. (Lexington, Ky., April 6, 1973)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS Affective Objectives; *Behavioral Objectives; *Behavior Change; Cognitive Objectives; *Communication (Thought Transfer); Communication Skills; *Human Relations; Interaction; Interpersonal Competence; *Interpersonal Relationship

ABSTRACT

The study of interpersonal behavior can be of most benefit to the student if he is allowed to assist in the construction of individualized behavioral objectives. To implement this approach the student must first identify what he perceives to be his communication strengths and weaknesses. Next, the student identifies his goal in the form of behavioral objectives, stating explicitly what he would like to be doing when he achieves his skill, the mastery level he wishes to attain, and how the accomplishment will be measured at the end of the instructional program. Then, student and teacher design several activities to modify and develop communication behavior. The use of behavioral objectives allows the student to receive criticism of his interpersonal communication skills within an objective context and facilitates the writing of criterion by which students' performance may be measured. (Included are behavioral objectives dealing with self-disclosure, levels of communication, empathy, nonverbal communication of feelings, roles, defensive/supportive communication, feedback, accuracy of communication, facework, hostility, and interpersonal communication breakdowns.) (EE)

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TO DISTURB THE SOUNDS OF SILENCE: INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION BEHAVIORAL OBJECTIVES

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Southern Speech Communication Convention
Lexington, Kentucky
April 6, 1973

CS 500 419

The title of my speech was deliberately selected to reflect upon the essence of Paul Simon's song "Sounds of Silence." His lyrics exposed the inability of people to communicate in the lines,

> And in the naked light I saw
> Ten thousand people maybe more.
> People talking without speaking
> People hearing without listening,
> People writing songs that voices never shared
> No one dared
> Disturb the sounds of silence.

While teaching speech I have become aware of students' desires to improve their interpersonal communication. The phrase, "Many men lead lives of silent desperation" takes on an additional meaning as students express the desire to fill those awful gaps in conversation. As one student phrased it,

> I can never think of things to talk about, and, if I do, I start to wonder if they're worth saying, and by that time I convince myself they're not, so I usually listen. This is a definite problem when the person I'm with doesn't have anything for me to listen to.

Another student dealt with the threat of silence differently and reported,

> I talk incessantly. It fills the empty spaces. If no one talks you run the risk that the other person is making a silent judgment of you and you don't have any control of that judgment.

While one student's words remained silent, the other spoke silent words, and yet, both represent a somewhat desperate attempt to disturb the sounds of silence.

These are just two of the many expressions of concern with interpersonal communication that I have encountered with students, and because they are unique to the individual communicator I have come to believe an individualized approach which utilizes behavioral objectives can most effectively satisfy their communication needs.

To implement this approach, it is necessary to first have the student identify what he perceives to be his communication strengths and weaknesses on an interpersonal or one-to-one basis. (This may be expanded to a consideration of communication skills in a group or as a public speaker.) If the student has trouble designating specific skills, the teacher may provide a pre-evaluation situation in which the student either interviews another student to gain information about that student or converses with a stranger on a controversial topic. If possible, this interview should be video- or audio-taped so that the student can evaluate his own communication skills and then, with the help of the teacher, select one specific skill on which to focus. Interpersonal communication skills such as (1) the ability to give opinions or feelings rather than small talk, (2) the ability to empathize, (3) the ability to be supportive of the other person and to reduce defensive communication, (4) the ability to give congruous verbal and nonverbal messages, (5) the ability to ask probing questions, (6) the ability to give accurate feedback, or (7) the ability to listen thoroughly to the content of another's speech, may be skills which the student identifies. Thus, the first step is for the student to identify the communication skill he would like to add to his repetoire.

The next step is the process involves the student identifying his goal in a behavioral objective form. In other words, the objective should state exactly what the student would like to be doing when he achieves the goal, the mastery level of the new skill he wishes to attain, and how the accomplishment will be measured at the end of his instructional program. An example may clarify. One student stated that he was usually quite shy, and although he thought he was a good listener, he just didn't talk with people freely. Thus, he determined his behavioral objective

would be: "While conversing with a new acquaintance, I will initiate the conversation and will ask a minimum of five open-ended questions to perpetuate the discussion for a minimum of ten minutes."

Another student chose to reach her behavioral objective in the classroom and stated, "Upon talking for ten minutes with another person about a topic that person selects, I will demonstrate the use of supportive nonverbal feedback. I will be successful if 75% of the class members who view the conversation feel I used supportive nonverbal feedback most of the time and if the person with whom I talked feels I used supportive nonverbal communication." Thus, the behavioral objectives which each student designs, with the help of the teacher, can be met in either everyday conversations or in a laboratory approach in the classroom with other students or a video or audio tape replay used for feedback.

With his objective set, the student, again with the aid of the teacher, should design several activities to enhance his awareness of the communication skills. For example, the student who wants to be more out-spoken may (1) identify characteristics of situations in which he speaks freely and those in which he says nothing, (2) observe and analyze the communication behavior of someone whom he perceives to be a "good" communicator and decide if that person exhibited any behaviors he could integrate into his behaviors, (3) read articles and books on conversation and interviewing techniques, and select specific skills on which to practice, (4) keep a record of positive feedback he receives from other people, (5) begin practicing his communication skills of questioning and commenting with people he knows and request their feedback on his conversational behaviors. In other words, it is not sufficient to tell a student to practice his new skill, but rather he should be given

exercises to accomplish which help him to more clearly identify specific facets of the skill and various ways of considering the skill.

Once the student is practicing the actual skill, he should request feedback from others about the use of the new skill. If the atmosphere of the classroom is supportive, classmates may give such feedback. If that is not appropriate, the student may select one person he particularly trusts and from whom he can accept honest feedback. Upon testing the achievement of the behavioral objective, the student should evaluate his internalization of the new skill to decide if he should maintain or modify it. If he decides that he is dissatisfied with the skill, he should decide if it is in accord with or adds to his self-concept. He should determine the credibility and perceived honesty of those who gave him feedback. He should decide if the exercises he used to meet his objective were satisfactory or if others would be better to help him reach his goal. He should determine if the behavioral objective was appropriate to fulfill his needs as a communicator and was realistic to accomplish. Finally, he should re-evaluate his pre-assessment to determine if he accurately defined his communication needs. After this evaluation, the student, with the teacher, may redesign an instructional strategy to meet his redefined goals.

Such an individualized approach to teaching interpersonal communication should allow the student to recognize his own needs and goals, and to build upon skills he already possesses. By using behavioral objectives, the student knows what he is striving to do and can analyze the communication skills he and others use to gain insight into fulfilling the objective. Thus, the awareness and involvement in the communication process should be relevant to the student's life outside of the classroom and thus provide motivation and personal challenge. Finally, this individualized approach

should help the student to (1) better understand his own communication, (2) be more tolerant of the communication attempts of others, (3) develop specific communication skills, and (4) eventually disturb the sounds of silence.

Behavioral Objectives

Behavioral objectives in interpersonal communication are unlike objectives in many academic areas because they often integrate cognitive and affective dimensions in the same objective. For example, by asking the student to intellectually describe or modify his use of feedback, he must cross that invisible line into his affective domain to become aware of this feedback behaviors and feelings about them. Perhaps this combination of affective and cognitive dimensions of communication is necessarily perceived as overlapping because "a person's speech is the person" and they are very difficult concepts tc consider separately. Thus, I feel that those objectives which ask the person to look at his own interpersonal communication behaviors call on his affective-emotional-response, not merely his cognitive-intellectual-response.

Secondly, I believe behavioral objectives in interpersonal communication are somewhat variable because they can be constructed to allow the student to approach the subject of interpersonal communication from an observer viewpoint, with no personal commitment. Although I do not feel this is the most valid means of teaching/learning interpersonal communication skills, I have included several objectives of this nature. One advantage of creating objectives in which the student is an observer is that it is easier to write criterion by which the student's performance may be measured. However, I agree with Albert R. Wright in his article, "Beyond Behavioral Objectives" in Educational Technology (July, 1972), pages 9-14, when he stated:

> In developing the measurement procedures, it should be recognized that an important source of assessment data is the student himself, particularly when dealing with internal states, behavior or attitudes that are difficult to observe or measure (such as confidence, interest, comfort, motivation, enjoyment, etc.). There would usually be some observable behavior that would confirm or deny the verbal statement, however, and provisions should be made for collection of data from sources other than the student's verbal report. In most instances it would be appropriate and perhaps even obligatory to confront the student with apparent lack of congruence between the verbal statement and exhibited behavior. This might be important feedback. (page 12)

Thus, I feel that teaching interpersonal communication can be of most benefit to the student if he is allowed to assist in the construction

of meaningful behavioral objectives which allow him to identify and modify his interpersonal communication behavior and relate measurement of the objectives in terms of both his outward integration of new communication behaviors into his repertoire and his explanation of internal feelings about the acquisition of the new behaviors.

Finally, a note about the divisions of the following informational (3 part) (marked with asterisk) and instructional (5 part) objectives: personal communication. Some of the three-part objectives are followed by one five-part objectives while others are followed by several five-part objectives. This is not an attempt to show proportionate stress on certain areas, but rather to indicate the wide range of objectives that are possible in terms of material to be covered, levels of the taxonomy of educational objectives to be met, and means of providing a standard of measurement. It is my belief that five-part behavioral objectives are most meaningful to a teacher when he creates them to meet his goals for his students--or better yet, created by students to meet their goals. Thus, although the five-part objectives are presented, the arbitrariness of the determination of the criterion makes them, in my opinion, valuable only as sample objectives. In addition, it should be noted that most of the standards are performance standards rather than accuracy standards. Although it would be possible to rewrite most of them to put them on a "graded scale," they were created with a pass-fail, minimal acceptance standard in mind.

SELF-DISCLOSURE

*The student will list factors in his relationship with another person which determine to what extent and how many of his attitudes and feelings he will share with the other person.

*The student will consciously attend to his interaction with another person to decide what factors affect his ability to share feelings and attitudes.

Given (1) his best friend, (2) someone he does not like, and (3) someone he does not know, the students will write a list of at least five factors for each person which determine to what extent and how many of his attitudes and feelings he will share with the other person.

LEVELS OF COMMUNICATION

*The student will identify the six levels of communication [including (1) cliche, (2) talk about other people or things, (3) give opinions and judgments, (4) tell feelings about something, (5) tell feelings about the other person, and (6) tell very deep feelings].

Student will correctly write at least one example of each of the six levels of communication.

The student will analyze the communication of two people whom he observes in class and will correctly identify on a printed form given him by the teacher in 80% of the statements the levels of communication on which the people spoke.

The student will listen to his own communication with (1) his best friend and (2) someone he has just met for the first time to determine on what level of communication he speaks with that person. The assignment is satisfactorily met when the student hands in a typewritten 2-4 page paper which (1) explains the level of communication on which he spoke with each person, (2) gives examples of the types of statements made to each person, and (3) explains why he spoke on those levels of communication with each of those people.

EMPATHY

*The student will define empathy.

*The student will be consciously aware of his own communication and will note how often he demonstrates empathic behavior during a typical day.

*The student will develop habits of learning about a receiver's background, interests, and feelings early in a conversation so as to increase his ability to empathize.

Given an audio-taped communication between two people, the student will accurately identify, orally to the instructor, ten of the possible fifteen empathic statements made in the conversation.

The student will consciously attempt to use empathic communication behavior while talking to a friend. To complete the requirements of this assignment, he will in a minimum of three, double-spaced typewritten pages report (1) how he used empathic communication, (2) how he liked using empathic communication, and (3) how effective he felt the use of empathic communication was in that situation.

The student will (1) decide upon ways to ask questions to gather information about a person and will then (2) practice using these questions to increase his ability to empathize in front of the class with another class member as the interviewee. After he receives feedback from the other students and from the interviewee about his use of questions to arrive at empathic communication, he will decide to modify or retain the questioning skill. If more than 25% of the class found his questioning techniques to be ineffective in producing more opportunity for empathic communication, he will modify his behavior or practice it again.

NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION OF FEELINGS

*Student will describe ways in which nonverbal communication expresses feelings, attitudes, and relationships between people in interpersonal communication.

The student will give at least one example of each of the following six categories of nonverbal communication (bodily movement, proxemics, tactile communication time, object language, and paralinguistics) to show how feelings, attitudes, relationships are expressed nonverbally.

The student will observe a minimum of 100 people in dyadic communication and will record in chart form the different nonverbal communication categories used by each pair which gave him clues to their relationship or feelings for (or against) each other.

The student will be video-taped while conversing with another person on a controversial topic for five minutes. His partner will give him feedback about his use of nonverbal communication, particularly noting how helpful it was in helping the partner to understand his verbal meaning. Then the student will view his own nonverbal communication, comparing what he sees with what nonverbal messages he would like to have given to support his verbal message. The criterion for success is that no more than 25% of his nonverbal communication was other than what he would want it to be (or was deemed confusing by his partner). If it is 25% or more, he will discuss, with his partner, how to modify his nonverbal behavior and will try out the new behaviors by repeating the process.

ROLES

*The student will define the roles (attitudes and behaviors) he assumes in different situations (such as on the job, in school, at home).

*The student will consciously consider the roles he assumes in his life.

Given a typical day, the student will list the roles he assumes during that day and will write a list of ten characteristics of his behaviors and attitudes in at least 3/4 of those roles.

The student will orally in front of the class evaluate his performance in at least one of the roles he assumes during the day by comparing his performance with the performance expected of him by other people in that situation (e.g., boss, parents, boyfriend). To satisfy the objective, the student must compare his performance with the criterion of the other people in at least ten ways.

The student will analyze his performance of a role that he does not feel he fulfills well by comparing his actual performance with the way he thinks he should perform, and will create a list of at least five behaviors he could do to better fulfill the demands of the roles.

Given his list of five behaviors to better fulfill the demands of a role he has analyzed, the student will incorporate at least one of these behaviors into his performance. He will request feedback from at least three other people on his new behavior in that role and will decide to modify or maintain that new behavior. If 2/3 of the people who give him feedback do not think the new behavior better meets the demands of the role, he will once again modify his behavior and receive feedback.

After viewing the first half of the movie The Eye of the Beholder (26 min. Black and White Filmffrom Mass Media Ministries) in class, the student will accurately describe in writing at least three of the roles Michael Girard played in three different situations. The accuracy of the student's description will be determined by comparing it with the actual roles Girard played.

DEFENSIVE/SUPPORTIVE COMMUNICATION

*The student will explain what is meant by defensive and supportive communication behavior.

The student will accurately write descriptions of at least five of the six pairs of defensive and supportive categories of behavior as identified by Jack R. Gibb in "Defense Level and Influence Potential in Small Groups," on a test given in class. Accuracy will be determined by matching the student's response with those categories listed by Gibb.

The student will observe a filmed conversation between a speeding motorist and the police officer who has stopped the motorist and will orally identify at least five examples of defensive communication.

The student will analyze his own communication between himself and his parents in a conversation where he is being reprimanded or denyed something, and will, in a written paper, of at least 200 words in length, identify examples of his defensive communication and give reasons why he responded defensively.

The student will consciously use supportive communication in a conversation with an unsuspecting friend and will give a five-minute oral presentation to the class on (1) the way in which he developed the supportive communication, verbally and nonverbally, (2) how comfortable he felt using supportive communication, and (3) the effect it had on his friend, in terms of how the friend responded, verbally and nonverbally, to the supportiveness.

Based on his use of supportive communication in a video-taped interview situation with another person in which he is the interviewer, the student will (1) receive feedback from the interviewee on the use of his supportive communication, (2) receive feedback from the rest of the class who viewed the original interview, (3) critique his own use of supportive communication by viewing the video-tape, and (4) decide to modify or incorporate supportive communication into his regular communication behaviors. If he was not satisfied with his use of supportive behavior, or 25% of the class members did not think he was supportive enough, or the interviewee did not think he was supportive enough, the student will conduct an interview again to improve his use of supportive communication.

FEEDBACK

*The student will discuss ways in which he may give feedback to another person about (1) the content of that person's messages and (2) about that person's personal characteristics.

*The student will practice using feedback (1) to check his understanding about what the source meant and (2) to give feedback to the source about the source.

The student will write a list of five advantages and five disadvantages of each verbal and nonverbal feedback in a fifteen minute period.

The student will distinguish, in writing, at least five characteristics of constructive and destructive interpersonal feedback during a quiz given in class.

The student will demonstrate by participating in a dyadic situation which is video-taped, each of the following types of feedback: (1) constructive verbal, (2) constructive nonverbal, (3) destructive verbal and (4) destructive nonverbal about (a) the content of the person's message and (b) the person.

The student will view the video-tape in which he demonstrated the four types of feedback and will evaluate in a typewritten, double-spaced two page paper the effectiveness and desirability of each type based on criteria for effectiveness and desirability which the student designs for himself.

The student will observe communication and will report in a three minute presentation in class a minimum of five advantages and five disadvantages of using open and direct feedback in interpersonal communication in response to (a) the content of the message and (b) the source of the message.

The student will write a 500-800 word essay which discusses a minimum of five characteristics of effective feedback and its relationship to interpersonal communication about the person and the message. The essay must include at least two examples to support each of the characteristics of effective feedback described.

ACCURACY OF COMMUNICATION

*Student will analyze conversations to determine the intent (purpose for communicating) of the source.

*The student will demonstrate his ability to listen accurately to the statements of another person.

*The student will consciously integrate listening behavior into his communication skills by listening for (1) the content or theme or what the person says and (2) the feeling the person has about the topic.

The student (A) will participate in a conversation with another person (B) who is role-playing a character with the particular goal of influencing (A) to do or say something. Person A will be successful in the assignment if he is able to accurately identify the goal of person B before B influences A to do or say the predetermine goal.

In pairs students will discuss a controversial topic with the stipulation that before one speaks, he must repeat what the other person has said to that person's satisfaction before responding himself. Students will continue this exercise until each person can accurately summarize the other person's position nine out of ten times on the first restatement. An outside observer will referee the event.

The student will observe dyadic communication outside of class and will report, in written form, a minimum of five specific examples of how inaccurate listening caused breakdowns in communication. The report should clarify the situation, the source and the receiver, and an explanation of the communication breakdown.

FACEWORK

*The student will identify the function of confirmation and rejection in interpersonal communication.

Given a video-taped conversation between a boy and his father after the boy has lost his first Little League baseball game, the student should identify on a paper-and-pencil, in-class quiz, a minimum of five examples in which the father attempts to confirm the son--or help the son to "maintain face."

HOSTILITY

*The student will identify the effect of hostility by one person toward another on their interpersonal communication.

The student will create a dialogue between two people in which a hostile reaction by one causes a hostile reaction by the other, thus causing the goals of communication by both participants to be blocked. The student will have two class members read and act out the parts of the dialogue which shows (1) the initial goals of communication of each person, (2) the hostility expressed by one toward the other, and (3) the hostile reaction of the second person. The dialogue may not be longer than ten minutes in length.

INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION BREAKDOWNS (MASKS, PERCEPTION PROPHECY, STEREOTYPING)

*The student will explain how "masks" of a person may cause communication breakdown in an interpersonal relationship.

After viewing a film about a person who never allows people to know him beyond a superficial level, the student will write a typewritten double-spaced two page analysis which explains why wearing a mask can be detrimental to building communication bonds with another person. The analysis should include 6 examples of statements which the person on the film said and explanation of why they hindered communication.

*The student will discuss how one's expectations of another person can affect the way in which he perceives that person.

The student will give at least five examples of situations in which he expected someone to behave in a certain way and he did (e.g., anticipated someone to be boring and he was), and will explain in 50-100 words what effect his "perception prophecy" could have had on his relationship with the person.

*The student will describe the effect of stereotyping on interpersonal communication effectiveness.

Given ten pictures of ten different individuals, the student will write ten paragraphs describing each person in terms of (1) nationality, (2) attitudes at that moment, (3) occupation, (4) age, and (5) general personality. He will describe how he would feel about talking with each person and about what he would expect to talk with each. The student will then compare his judgments with the facts about each person to determine what role stereotyping played in his judgment and what misperceptions he had about each individual which could have caused communication breakdowns. The objective will be met when the student gives a five-minute summary in front of the class of the results of this experiment.

Footnotes

[1]LeRoi Jones, Tales, Evergreen ed (New York, 1967), p. 78.

[2]Ted Joans, "Uh Huh," in Black Fow-wow: Jazz Poems (New York, 1969), p. 17.

[3]LeRoi Jones, "Look For You Yesterday Here You Come Today," in Preface To A Twenty Volume Suicide Note (New York, 1961), p. 16.

[4]Hughes, "Dream Boogie," "Children's Rhymes," from Montage of a Dream Deferred (1951). Reprinted in Black Voices, ed. Abraham Chapman, Mentor ed (New York, 1968), pp. 428-429.

[5]Dictionary of Afro-American Slang (New York, 1970), p. 14

[6]"The Literature of Black," Black World XIX, vii (June, 1970), 9-10.

[7]"The Lyrics of James Brown," in Amistad 2, eds John A. Williams and Charles F. Harris (New York, 1971), pp. 24-25.

[8]James Stewart, "The Development of the Black Revolutionary Artist," in Black Fire: An Anthology of Afro-American Writing, Apollo ed., eds LeRoi Jones and Larry Neal (New York, 1968), p. 3.

[9]Neal, "And Shine Swam On," ibid., p. 656

[10]"African Voices of Protest," in The Militant Black Writer in Africa and the United States, by Mercer Cook and Stephen E. Henderson (Madison, Wis., 1969), p. 52.

[11]Rebellion or Revolution ? Apollo ed (New York, 1968), pp. 109-111.

[12]Blues People: Negro Music in White America, Apollo edition (New York, 1963), p. 220.

[13] Black Nationalism and the Revolution in Music, Merit Book ed (New York, 1970), p. 57.

[14] Edward Brathwaite, The Folk Culture of the Slaves in Jamaica (London, 1970), p. 7.

[15] "We Wear the Mask," in The Complete Poems of Paul Laurence Dunbar (New York, 1913), p. 71.

[16] See, for example, Stephen A. Bronz, Roots of Negro Racial Consciousness: The 1920's: Three Harlem Renaissance Authors (New York, 1964), pp. 9-13.

[17] "Black Art," in Black Magic: Collected Poetry 1961-1967 (Indianapolis, 1969), pp. 116-117.